



POCKET PC Expert

Are your pockets straining at the seams from the combined bulk of your handheld and music player?

Steve Clack shows you how to store and play music on your Pocket PC and even capture podcasts



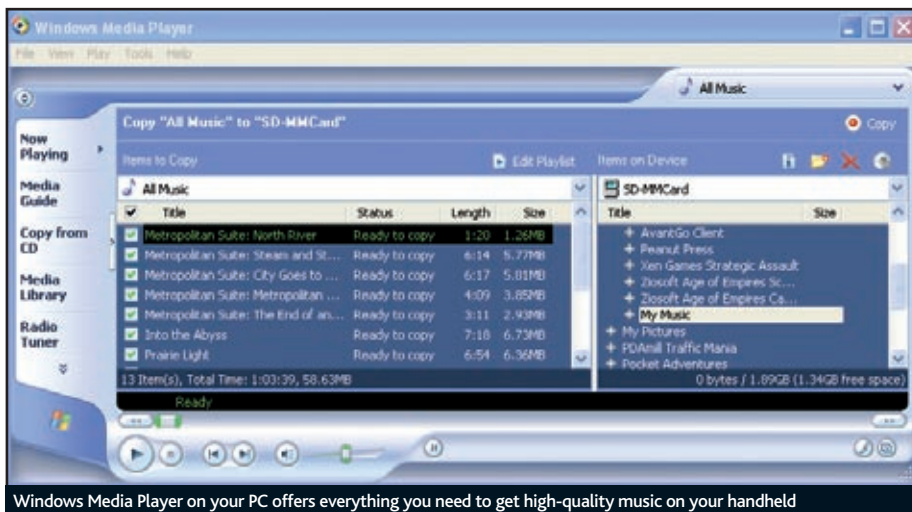
INTERNET RADIO ON YOUR HANDHELD

Your Pocket PC may already have replaced your Sony Walkman or Apple iPod for playing music, but if it's equipped with wireless, it can also replace your portable radio when you're in range of a WiFi hotspot. Resco Radio (\$20, around £11, from www.resco-net.com) enables you to stream internet radio broadcasts from around the world and listen to them on your Pocket PC through headphones or its built-in speakers. If you prefer, you can record incoming streams to your handheld's internal memory or storage card and listen to them later using Windows Media Player. The program provides dozens of station presets, and you can enter the URL of any MP3 or Ogg Vorbis internet radio stream. You can even set Resco Radio to record programmes automatically while you're away from your Pocket PC.

EASY POCKET PC TO MAC

Apple users may be surprised to hear that they can now synchronise Pocket PCs and Windows Smartphone devices with their Macintosh computers. The new version 2.0 of The Missing Sync for Windows Mobile (\$40, around £22, from www.markspace.com) adds support for the latest OS X 10.4 (Tiger) with a host of useful synchronisation functions. As well as offering full syncing with Microsoft Entourage and Apple's Address Book and iCal, it lets you connect to your Mac through USB, Bluetooth or WiFi (Apple AirPort). You can also transfer MP3 audio files easily from iTunes and import and export still images with iPhoto.

Mac users can still install third-party software provided as EXE files only through Microsoft's Virtual PC (around £180 from www.microsoft.com/uk/mac), but The Missing Sync enables direct installation of software supplied as CAB files, which are becoming increasingly prevalent. The Missing Sync also allows Mac users to back up the Pocket PC My Documents folder, and the entire device including storage cards can be mounted on the Mac desktop for quick file transfer and backup.



Windows Media Player on your PC offers everything you need to get high-quality music on your handheld

Lovely though Apple's iPod is, if you already carry a Pocket PC wherever you go, it makes more sense to use this as a music player than to buy a separate gadget. The Pocket PC offers excellent sound quality as well as convenience. Even if music isn't your thing, podcasting now enables you to listen to a huge variety of radio-style programmes on your handheld.

To turn your Pocket PC into an audio player, you'll need a large memory card. It's possible to store eight hours of high-quality music on a £25 512MB SD Card, and three times that if you're prepared to compromise a little on the sound quality in order to reduce file sizes. If you've no idea how to get music or podcasts on your Pocket PC, here's our introductory guide.

FROM CD TO POCKET PC

Although there are various digital audio formats, there's no need to get bogged down in the details – at least, not to begin with. For music recordings, Microsoft's own WMA format is more efficient than the more ubiquitous MP3, producing smaller files for the equivalent sound quality. To convert one of your own CDs to WMA format, simply open the built-in Windows Media Player on your PC, insert the CD, click on the player's Copy from CD button and hit the Copy Music button near the top of the window. It will take several minutes to convert the CD's contents into audio files, a process known as ripping.

Assuming that you haven't changed the settings from their defaults, this will put all the resulting WMA files (one for each song) into your My Music folder in My Documents on the PC, with tracks named correctly and sorted into albums. You can choose to copy individual tracks instead of entire CDs if you prefer.

The default player settings produce files that are encoded at a bit rate of 128Kbit/s. That simply

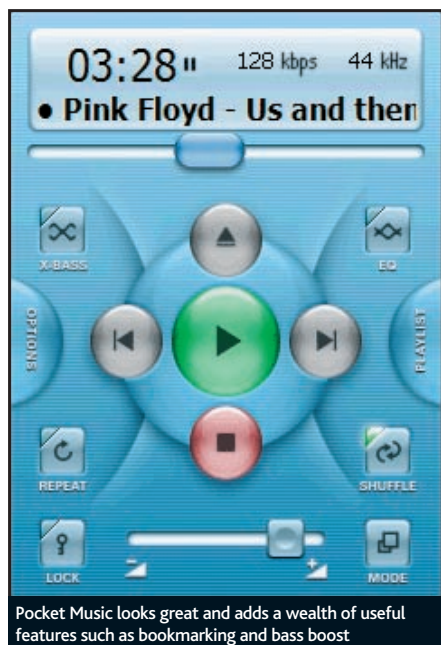
means a minute of music occupies about 1MB of memory. You can adjust Windows Media Player's settings, but dropping the bit rate to save space lowers the sound quality, while raising the bit rate makes files bigger. A rate of 128Kbit/s is about right for most of us, but you may find that music still sounds acceptable at the minimum quality setting of 48Kbit/s, or you may prefer something higher for supreme sound quality. It depends on personal preference, the quality of the earphones you're using and the amount of background noise in your typical listening environment.

Once you've used Windows Media Player to copy some music from CDs to your PC's digital library, plug your Pocket PC into its ActiveSync cradle or cable and use the Copy to Portable Device... option from Windows Media Player's File menu. Choose the songs you want to copy from the left-hand pane and select a destination folder on your Pocket PC (almost certainly a storage card rather than internal memory, unless it's just one or two songs) from the right-hand pane. Then tap on the Copy button at the top-right of the window and wait for the copying process to finish.

BEYOND WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER

The Windows Media Player built into every Pocket PC is easy to use, but its very basic playback features make it unsuitable for listening to podcasts, as you can't bookmark your position and return to it later. It also doesn't work well with large audio files, gives minimal control over playlists and lacks any tone controls for adjusting the sound output.

There are quite a few third-party music players available for Pocket PC, but Pocket Player (\$20, around £11, from www.conduits.com) and Pocket Music (\$20 from www.pocketmind.com) offer a superior combination of features at a decent price. Pocket Player is perhaps the easier of the two to use,



Pocket Music looks great and adds a wealth of useful features such as bookmarking and bass boost

but both support all popular audio formats, including MP3 and Ogg Vorbis, and include the all-important bookmarking feature for podcasts. Both offer a full graphic equaliser and a separate gain control to squeeze a little more volume from your handheld's headphone socket, although this can introduce distortion if you crank it up too far.

PODCASTING

Podcasting is really taking off at the moment, and with good reason. Essentially, it enables almost anyone to produce an internet radio programme, turn it into an MP3 file and put it on the web for download. Don't let the amateurish quality of some podcasts put you off, though – you'll find a number of top-notch broadcasts in this format, including interviews, talk shows and news programmes.

You can download podcasts as MP3 files directly from the relevant websites, but it's much easier to use an aggregator program such as iPodder (free, from <http://ipodder.sourceforge.net>) or Apple iTunes 4.9 (free, from www.apple.com). These will allow you to browse available content grouped by genres and download every episode of your favourite programmes automatically. Once you have downloaded the MP3 files, you can copy them to your Pocket PC's storage card.

CONVENIENT STORE

The sound quality from most Pocket PCs compares well to that of dedicated music players such as the iPod. Your PDA can't match the 60GB storage capacity of top-end iPods, and you can't download and play music from the popular iTunes website, which uses a proprietary format. But if you simply want to keep a selection of your favourite CDs or weekly podcasts available for listening on the go, your Pocket PC is just perfect. **CS**

CONTACT

POCKET PC EXPERT

If there is anything you would like to see covered in *Pocket PC Expert*, please contact us at the address below

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REVIEW SPEAKERS

POWERTRAVELLER Powertraveller K8000B

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £85 inc VAT and delivery

SUPPLIER Powertraveller 01420 542980

DETAILS www.powertraveller.com

Your Pocket PC provides the perfect way to enjoy audio entertainment while you're on the move, but what if you want to continue listening when you get home? If you want to keep the music coming, you'll need a set of external speakers for your Pocket PC. There's a huge range of speakers available for Apple iPods, but precious few work with generic music players such as your Pocket PC. If you're looking for good sound quality, the Powertraveller K8000B is a perfect choice. With an impressive 8W total output it fills even large rooms with rich, clear sound.

To achieve such a high volume the unit is mains-powered only, so it's not completely portable, but it's really the only way to get this kind of performance. With its retro-style aluminium casing, the 184x82x85mm box looks superb. The only thing that gives it away as being a loudspeaker unit is the pair of small stereo grilles on the left and right sides of the case.



The K8000B's thundering bass comes from a large sub-woofer mounted out of sight on the bottom, which is complemented by an open reflex port (that is, a hole) on the left side of the box. The K8000B comes with a cable to attach it to the standard headphone socket of your Pocket PC, and of course it works with any other portable audio player, iPod, or even your PC.

It's not cheap, but given the outstanding sound and build quality it's still good value.

✓ Superb build quality; capable of high volume; good sound

✗ Mains-powered only, so not completely portable

HINTS & TIPS PRODUCTIVITY

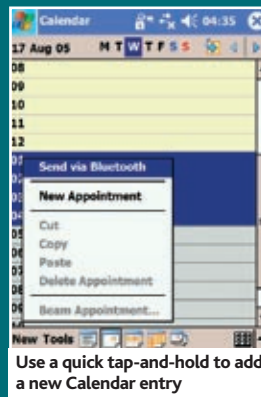
TOP TAP-AND-HOLD TIPS

You've probably noticed that if you tap your Pocket PC screen with the stylus and hold it there for a second or so, a circle of blue dots appears, followed by a contextual menu. It's much like right-clicking your mouse in Windows, so don't expect it to work everywhere, but it's a quick way of accessing many useful features. Here's a list of our top tap-and-hold tips.

1 Tap-and-hold in Calendar's Agenda view, Day view or Week view to bring up a menu from which you can add a new appointment. What makes this really useful is that the appointment's start time corresponds to where you tapped the screen. The menu also allows you to copy, cut, paste and delete, a feature common to many contextual menus.

2 In Contacts, if you tap-and-hold on an entry while in the main list view, you'll find a Send Email option provided the person's email address is included in their details. This takes you straight into the Messaging application, with the recipient's address already filled in.

3 Formatting cells in Pocket Excel is quicker with tap-and-hold. The Format cells command that appears in the



contextual menu applies to whatever you have selected, be it an individual cell or everything in the current row or column. It works with multiple rows and columns too, or even a block of cells: just choose the range you want to include, lift the stylus off the screen and tap-and-hold anywhere within the highlighted area.

4 In Pocket Word, a tap-and-hold will enable you to insert the current date into your

document, but if you select a word or block of text first and then tap-and-hold again in the highlighted area, you can quickly apply formatting or spellcheck the current block.

5 For programs that have a file list view, such as Pocket Word and Pocket Excel, tap-and-hold offers the easiest way to delete, rename, move or duplicate documents. It's also a quick way to email a document to somebody else as an attachment, assuming you've already saved it in a format that the recipient can read. Pocket Word and Pocket Excel files can only be read directly by other Pocket PC users. If you send them to anyone else, be sure to open the file and resave it in the standard Word or Excel format first.